

ognized it, and Voltaire, too." From this position he never deviated. But if he realized that for him the impartial attitude of the observer was the only possible attitude, it was not because he felt that science should have the last word.

Let me remind you, [he writes to Suvorin] that the writers, who we say are for all time or are simply good, and who intoxicate us, have one common and very important characteristic; they are going toward something and are summoning you toward it, too, and you feel not with your mind, but with your whole being, that they have some object. Some have more immediate objects—the abolition of serfdom, the liberation of their country, politics, beauty, or simply vodka, like Denis Davydov; others have remote objects—God, life beyond the grave, the happiness of humanity, and so on. The best of them are realists and paint life as it is, but, through every line's being soaked in the consciousness of an object, you feel, besides life as it is, the life which ought to be, and that captivates you. And we? We! We paint life as it is, but beyond that—nothing at all. . . . We have neither immediate nor remote aims, and in our soul there is a great empty space.

There is the motto of all Chekhov's writings, there is the special insight that made him so perfect an interpreter of his age. V. W. B.

A REVIEWER'S NOTE-BOOK.

A FORMIDABLE problem has arisen for the American critic, a problem that grows more and more complicated, more and more fascinating from season to season, the problem of the Adams family. And it can be safely predicted that among the outstanding books of the next few years there will be one with some such title as *The Pessimism of the Adamses*. For this book the documents continue to accumulate. Henry Adams' "Education," Charles Francis Adams' "Autobiography," Brooks Adams' "Law of Civilization and Decay" are not the last of the testaments of that extraordinary triumvirate of brothers, whose points of view have so much in common. Brooks Adams, the least known, in his long introduction to "The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma" (Macmillan), his brother Henry's "letter to teachers of history," reveals himself not only as a powerful contributor to the Adams intellectual complex but also as an equally powerful variant of the Adams character. Much would the author of that future study give for a third autobiography, the confession of the only one of the three who stayed in Boston and kept his pew in the church at Quincy.

THERE is an Adams family philosophy, as peculiar a possession as the Adams family manner. This "heritage" Mr. Brooks Adams traces directly to his grandfather, the sixth President, to him "the most interesting and suggestive personage of the early nineteenth century." (So fixed is this belief in the importance of the fountain-head of the Adams creed that he used to urge his brother, after continuing his "Mont St. Michel" down to the Reformation, to write a culminating volume, from the Reformation to John Quincy Adams.) In the present book, his aim is to show how Henry's beliefs were the outgrowths of his grandfather's experience. John Quincy Adams had devoted his life to a single political object, the "system of internal improvement by means of national energies." He believed in the democratic principle, he believed that by a collective effort the American people could so conserve their unlimited resources as to be raised forever beyond the danger of competition, slavery, and war and enabled to "establish the practical, self-evident truth of the natural equality and brotherhood of all mankind." Then came Jackson with the spoils system, the abandonment of all internal improvement, the flood of competition, and Adams saw the American Union, as a moral person in the family of nations, condemned to live from hand to mouth. He lost his faith in Providence and the dominance of reason, he felt that the ape and the tiger in man would never be unseated again, and his life went down in failure. That is the belief which Henry Adams

inherited and which, using the theory of averages, he worked out in the pitiless, mechanistic argument of the latter half of this book. It is a sad and enervating belief, akin to that which the circumstances of our own time have enforced upon many minds throughout the world.

BUT how much of this pessimism is due to the peculiar situation of the Adams family itself? How much to its inherited Calvinism? How much to the singular exaggeration of its own importance, and especially to the importance of one phase of the American experiment? How much, above all, to the fact that the Adamses were cut to the pattern of eighteenth century statesmen and found themselves like fresh-water fish in the deep sea? Introspective as they are, they have never asked these questions and it is just because of these questions that the formidable problem of the Adamses remains so fascinating. The second "Education," when it comes to be written, will be at least as interesting as the first, even though, like the first, it be self-condemned to sterility.

THE atmosphere of the Adamses is one of a profound distrust of human nature: sink yourself in it and you almost forget that life renews itself, that life is perpetually reborn in hope, good will, intelligence, love. Men like Carleton H. Parker are the best answer to the Adams argument. Parker has already become almost a legendary figure: his enthusiasm, his vitality, his big-hearted understanding of life made him the type, one should like to think, of the American student. Not an original thinker, he had been brooding over the problems of labour unrest until he was nearly forty before he finally found his key in the Freudian psychology; thereafter, till his death in 1918, his spirit at the highest pitch, his mind incandescent, he applied himself to the analysis of the situation of the unskilled worker, especially in the West. His four chief contributions which form, not in their theoretic basis but in their field of application, one of the pioneer documents of contemporary American thought, have now been collected in "The Casual Laborer and Other Essays" (Harcourt, Brace and Howe.) Here we have his well-known study of the I. W. W., his analyses of the California casual, and the remarkable paper, "Toward Understanding Labor Unrest," the germ of the great book he would have written. No writings of our time reveal a bigger vision than these, a more lucid, luminous intelligence.

VERY impressive is the force of feeling behind the essays and sketches and poems of W. E. Burghardt Du Bois' "Darkwater" (Harcourt, Brace and Howe.) In a sense the successor of Booker Washington, the editor of the *Crisis* reveals himself here as a very different type of leader and one far less digestible from the traditional American point of view. Where Booker Washington was a Fabian, Du Bois is a temperamental insurgent: he is, for the Negroes, a nationalist of the true Mazzinian stripe. But, before everything else, he is a poet, a poet who knows how to handle statistics; bitter, passionate, eloquent. He is a thinker, too: well-conducted are his arguments on the position of Negro women, on the Negro as servant, on the status of the black race in international affairs. What will shock many readers into thinking on their own account is Mr. DuBois' disillusionment with America as a moral protagonist in the new era. "Instead of standing as a great example of the success of democracy and the possibility of human brotherhood," he says, "America has taken her place as an awful example of its pitfalls and failures, so far as black and brown and yellow peoples are concerned. . . . America, Land of Democracy, wanted to believe in the failure of democracy so far as darker people are concerned." As the spokesman of the Negro race he thus ranges himself beside the representatives of the immigrant population who, disabused and unassimilated, confront the assumptions of American history with a terrible question which the next generation will have to answer.